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Leroy Garrett, Editor

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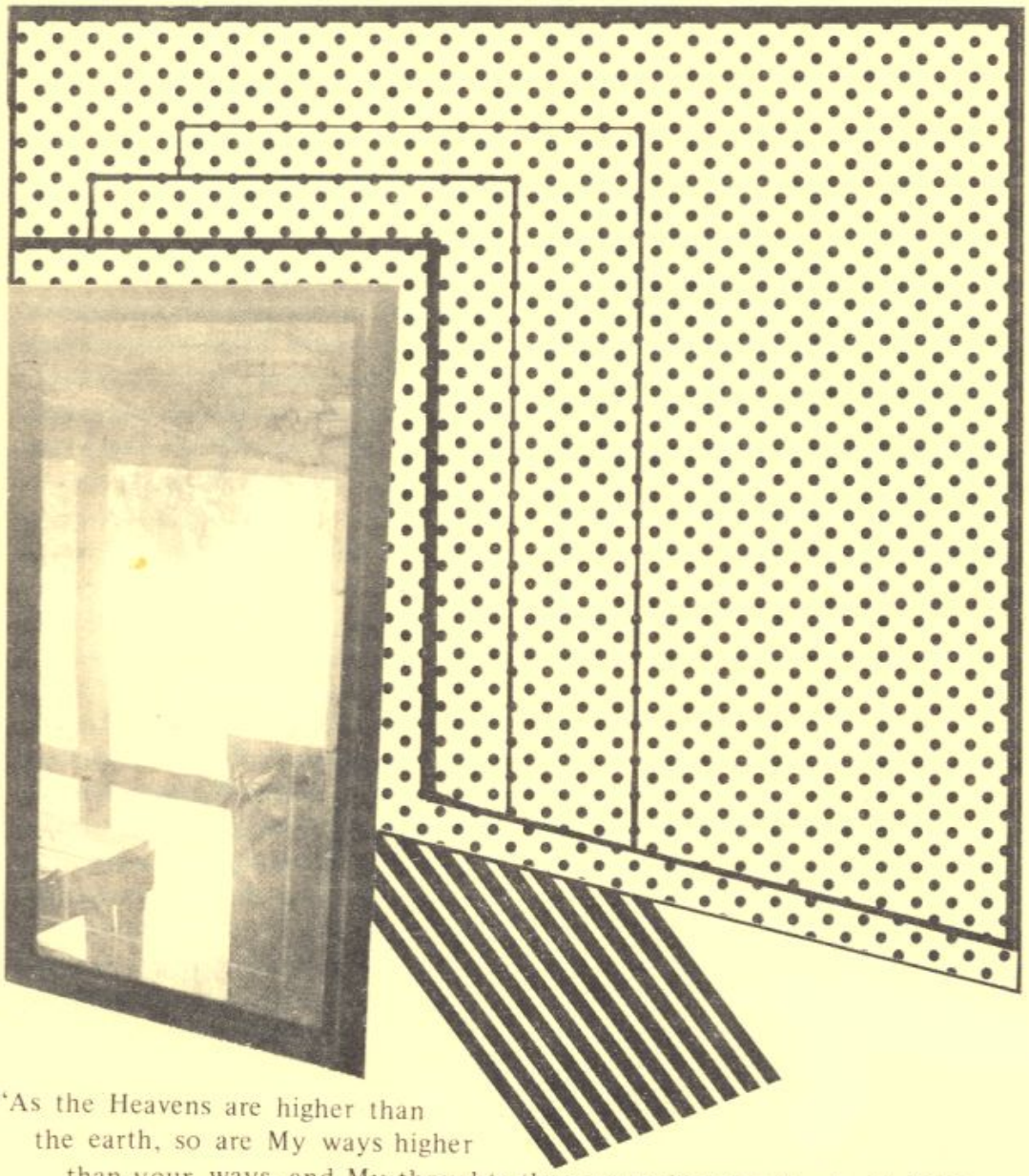

"As the Heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." *Isaiah 55:9*

Volume 17, No. 8 **Leroy Garrett, Editor** **October 1975**

The Word Abused . . .

THE SUNDAY MORNING RIP-OFF

If by means of a time-tunnel we could be transposed to an assembly of the primitive saints, such as a gathering of the Church of Christ in Thessalonica or Philippi, we would likely be in for the shock of our lives. The contrast between what they believed and practiced over against the typical "Church of Christ" of this generation would be bolder than a crack of thunder out of a clear sky. If those early congregations form a *pattern* for the way we should be, we have done a poor job in following it. In no way have we abused the scriptures so grossly than in our claim that we are a true representation of the primitive church "in name, organization, doctrine and practice." The Sunday morning assembly especially illustrates this abuse of the scriptures. We can only conclude that it is a ripoff, being hardly a faint likeness of what it claims to emulate. Moreover, it is in some instances a rank denial of what the scriptures reveal as crucial in the corporate worship of the early church.

The list of things that would appear strange to us in primitive worship is extensive. Some of the primitive congregations had a love feast in connection with the Supper (1 Cor. 14:21, 33; Jude 12), and the "lifting up of holy hands" must have been common (1 Tim. 2:8). There was also the "laying on of hands" for several purposes (Acts 13:3; 1 Tim. 5:22). The cry "Maranatha, Come, Lord Jesus!" was often prayed in the assemblies (1 Cor. 16:22; Rev. 22:20), and it must have been common for them to speak out and say *Amen!* to the prayers (1 Cor. 14:16). There were at least some who spoke in tongues (1 Cor. 14:27) and they were instructed to call for the elders to pray and anoint them with oil when seriously ill (Jas. 5:14).

Some of the sisters prayed and prophesied in the assembly *with their heads covered* (1 Cor. 11:5) and some of them served as deacons (Ro. 16:1; 1 Tim. 3:8-13). They confessed their sins to one another (J as. 5:14) and they sometimes greeted each other with a holy kiss (1 Thess. 5:26; Rom. 16:16). Their assemblies were more spontaneous than structured, and they all shared in building each other up (Eph. 4:16). They owned no property, met mostly in homes, and were often persecuted to the point that they assembled in secret. They were ever conscious of the power of the Holy Spirit (1 Thess. I:5), prayed in the Spirit (Eph. 6:18), were filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18), and drank of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13). Their assemblies were such that sinners were likely to bow down, seeing that God was indeed among them (1 Cor. 14:25). They probably knelt in prayer to the Father (Eph. 3:14), and perhaps sometimes they stood, but almost certainly they never sat. I agree with Prof. Metzger at Princeton that sitting in prayer before the God of heaven is an

innovation of the modern church, that all through its early history the church always knelt or stood.

If all this would not be startling enough to a 20th century church member. there would surely be missing a great deal of what he would expect to see, supposing as he does that the primitive congregations must have been "the spittin' image" of the churches he knows in Texas and Tennessee. They would, for instance, be completely unaware of any "five acts of worship" that we talk about. They would see *worship* in terms of the whole of their life in God and not as a series of acts in their meetings (Ro. 12:1). Some of the "acts" that we count off would very likely not even be evident. There was almost certainly nothing like our "Sunday morning offering" and probably no collection at all in the assemblies, except perhaps occasional gestures toward the poor —though it cannot be proved that this was done "at church." The collection in 1 Cor. 16:2 was provisional, which means that they had not been doing this before Paul asked them to and probably did not continue it after he came and took the money away. It was for a special emergency. Besides, it was laid aside at home, not in the assembly, as most every Greek scholar will point out.

There was probably no congregational singing as we practice it, if at all, though they may have chanted to each other antiphonally (back and forth), as an early historian indicates. They did have solos, for any brother that "hath a hymn" was encouraged to sing it (1 Cor. 14:26). None of the scriptures about singing are related *per se* to the assembly, but to the personal life of the believer, and they call for "*addressing one another* in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs," which is hardly a description of congregational singing. So, if we can't establish congregational singing, we cannot establish a musical accompaniment. It is likely, however, that if a brother in the early church chose to "sing a psalm" (Col. 3:16), he might well have used one of the many instruments available in that day, especially if he were a Jewish believer, for a *psalm* to him meant playing as well as singing. The *Selahs* in the Psalms were probably the cue for a musical interlude. The Jewish brother, if not the Gentile, would be inclined to "Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp!" as Psa. 150 would instruct him. So, in giving his psalm to you in either his home or at the assembly he would likely accompany it or intersperse it with melodious touches of the harp or the gentle sounds of a lute. I realize that this would deeply distress our visitor from Fifth and Izzard in Dallas, but he might find himself enraptured in the Spirit in spite of himself. He might even fall down and worship, seeing that God is indeed among them, harp or no harp!

Conspicuously absent would be "the minister" or "the pastor," a position that we have taken more from our religious neighbors than from the scriptures. The primitive churches were nourished by the elders or shepherds of the flock (Acts 20:28), while evangelists were out breaking new ground for the Lord. The believers were generally knowledgeable and able to teach each other (Ro. 15:14), and so in the assemblies they mutually edified

one another (1 Pet. 4:9-11). Paul could say to the Corinthians (14:26), *When you come together each one has a lesson.* Not so in our assemblies. A brother may share with the Masons, the Elks, the Lions, and the Alcoholics Anonymous, but in the assembly of saints he has to be a spectator, however meaningful a lesson he may have. He is victimized by the Sunday morning rip-off.

The modern saint might also be made uncomfortable by the crude simplicity of primitive worship. He might be sandwiched in between smelly fishermen, fresh from their nets, or slaves just in from the fields, smelling no better (Jas. 2:2). He might be seated, not in a cushioned pew in an air-conditioned edifice, but on the damp floor of a catacomb, buried away from the searching eyes of Roman authorities. On more propitious occasions it would be in some believer's humble abode, where the less poor would gather with their destitute brothers in the Lord, some of whom were owned by other men, spread out their nap sacks in a love feast and break bread in the name of him "who was rich, but became poor, so that they might be rich."

Still later as the rich and the noble accepted the faith they had more comfortable and commodious homes in which to gather (Philemon 2), and they periodically had the protection of the law. But it was two centuries before they bought property and went into the real estate business —and into apostasy! With all this came the clergy and the seminary to educate them, which the historian Moshein describes as "the grave of primitive Christianity." Soon we had "our image" to think about, and with the passing centuries we came to think in terms of million dollar edifices. And so came the Sunday morning rip-off. The claim that we are *that* church that we read about in the New Testament, and that in our life and worship we duplicate what they were and what they did, is the biggest counterfeit in human history. We are duped into believing the grand clerical lie, that we —and only we are the New Testament church. It is a colossal rip-off.

We are hamstrung by buildings, real estate, pews, pulpits, clergy, treasuries, and budgets. Our leaders have to monitor what is said in the assembly lest a tradition be challenged or a sister church be offended. We scringe if a brother lifts his hands in prayer or speaks in a tongue, and we would be shocked at the cry of *Maranatha.* And of course *Amens* and *praise the Lord!* are off limits. We have our image to think about and the buildings to pay for. We *sit* —believe it, many of our churches *sit* —in prayer to the King of the Universe, even with our knees still crossed, while the humblest monarch of earth is never approached by one of his subjects with such passivity. We count our worship in terms of "acts" and watch the clock to make sure it ends on time. We "go to worship" and "leave worship," as if it were something that can be turned off and on. We employ all the modern gadgetry we want, whether multiple cups for the Supper, the Sunday School, the pulpit and the professional staff that goes with it, budgets and sub budgets, auxiliary institutions of all sorts, agencies and societies —all this and more, and yet we manage to

find “prooftexts” that all we do is after the ancient, apostolic order. We are impatient with those who object to what we do, labeling them hobbyists, while at the same time we draw the line of fellowship on those who practice what we oppose, calling them heretics. Our arrogance reaches the point to where we can drive by an edifice marked “Church of Christ” and be satisfied that it is one more New Testament church in name, organization, doctrine and practice; but if it be a Christian Church or a Baptist Church, we can only regret that they haven’t accepted “the truth” like we have and are not just like us. It turns the unity plea that began with the Campbells into a call for conformity. *Simply be like us!* That is the only answer anybody needs for the age-old problem of a divided church!

I am not saying that we must do precisely as the primitive saints did, even if we could lift from the records an exact picture. I do not accept the view of *patternism.* If God intended this, he would have given us a more detailed outline of procedures. I do not believe that we have to meet in catacombs or private homes like they did. I believe we *may* have congregational singing, a budget and a treasury, and even a professional staff (so long as it allows for Body ministry), even though they probably had none of these things. I believe we can be the Body of Christ in this world whether we have the organ or not, whether we have Sunday Schools or not, or whether we have this or that movement or this or that agency or supporting church or not. There must be value in lifting holy hands, fasting, washing the saints’ feet, the holy kiss, speaking in tongues, and the *Maranatha* or they would not find expression in the life of the early church. But I do not conclude that these are *necessary* for us, even if they do prove to be useful to some.

My plea is that we recognize what is essential and that we unite on that basis. That we *be* the Body of Christ is essential, holding to the one faith, the one Lord, the one baptism. It is essential that we meet in the name of Christ and break bread within his fellowship, encouraging and edifying one another. We are all to go to the scriptures in search of those norms that will direct our life and worship. We will differ in our interpretation of the information we have. Some will choose to meet in homes and not own a church edifice. Some will elect to have instrumental music while others will remain a capella. Some will form agencies for mission work and some will prefer direct support, while still others will be content to do nothing. In spite of such differences we can all be the Body of Christ together, united in essentials.

The rip-off comes when any of us presume to be *the* church to the exclusion of all other believers. We are only playing the counterfeit role when we claim to be the exact reproduction of the primitive church at work and worship, when in fact we take as many liberties with what is actually in the scriptures as the next people. No group today is the New Testament church in the sense that it is an exact likeness of what the scriptures reveal —if for no other reason because the scriptures yield no one, composite picture of what that church was. We all choose what we like, and then reject the other fellow because he selects

things that we neglect. We can and *must* recover what is catholic or universal —that which is necessary for all time and in all places to be the Body of Christ. This "faith of our fathers" we can have even while sitting in cushioned pews and luxurious buildings, even if such things are often obstacles. To bear the likeness of Jesus and to grow in him, being filled with his Spirit, is a universal. To worship him in the fellowship of the saints around the Supper is a universal. The seven unities of Eph. 4 are universals. But whether a brother speaks in tongues, fasts twice a week, tithes, or has a piano at his church is *not* a matter of the catholic faith.

We have been taken, been "had," when we allow ourselves to be duped into believing what Dr. Robert Richardson, that grand old pioneer of the Restoration Movement, calls "the fallacy of synecdoche," which is to presume that only a part is the whole. Surely we do not have to believe that the kingdom of God begins and ends with us, that as we sit in the assembly that we, and only we, reflect the faith of the primitive believers. It should be enough for us to be a part (not party) of the great Church of God on earth, however bruised it may be by the scourge of division.

When I sit with the saints on Sunday morning in a typical "Church of Christ," my view of things is rather simple. *These too are God's people,* I say to myself, *they are my brothers and sisters and I love them.* But in saying that I realize that God also has some children at the other churches in town, not because they're Methodists or Baptists, but because they too have been saved by "the bath of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Tit. 3:5). Even if I am non-instrumental music by preference, I realize that the kingdom of God does not consist of such matters. And I allow no one to deceive me into believing that "we have restored the primitive church" in the way we worship. I would have to smile at that, for in a lot of ways I know we haven't, and that others have done better at this in some areas than we have.

But we are immersed believers. We do look to Jesus, more or less, and we believe in bearing his likeness. We break bread together, and to the extent that I am allowed I share in the building up of the church. If we can't go home to be with the Lord from "sectarian" churches, then hardly anyone will go, for this is the condition of the Christian world. But this does not mean that I personally have to be a sectarian, and I see no point in moving from one party to another party. I rather see a need to remain where the Lord has dropped me down (What a distinctive blessing it was to be born into the right church!) and to work and pray for the oneness of all believers, based upon catholic principles rather than upon particular opinions.

And I have no intention of that goal being misdirected by falling prey to the Sunday morning rip-off. Six times or so the New Covenant scriptures warn us about being deceived. We do well to take heed. —*the Editor*

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The Word Abused . . .

"Where There is No Vision, the People Perish"

In our mishandling of the scriptures we sometimes not only make them say what was never intended by the writer, but we have them convey a meaning that is contrary both to logic and common sense. Such is the case with Pro. 29:18a, which reads as above in the *King James.* The second part of the verse is never quoted, for it would confuse the point that is intended to be made. It reads: "but he that keepeth the law, happy is he."

Perhaps it is not a serious abuse of the word, but it is one more example of how we use the Bible improperly. We should break such bad habits, and one way is for someone to call attention to them.

This line is made to mean what is not necessarily the case at all, which is that a person or a church will perish or fail or prove ineffective if he or it does not show foresight and ambition in the work that is before him. It is often applied to elders: if they do not have vision (such as making ambitious plans for the church), the work that they lead will come upon hard times. It will *perish* —just what this means is never elaborated upon. But the idea is that they should get with it and lead the congregation with imagination, or else the thing is likely to go down the drain. They are clobbered with Pr. 29:18: "Where there is no vision, the people perish."

We all recognize that persons and churches are better off when they are perceptive and imaginative, but the lack of this does not necessarily spell disaster. Some of our oldest congregations have not been exactly perceptive, and even some of the "successful" ones in terms of size and influence are not known for their creativity and imaginative contemplation, if we can make "vision" mean all those things. Still they haven't perished. Many congregations that seem to be immune to change and reactionary to any kind of productive planning manage to stay alive. Sometimes they thrive on their orthodoxy. They certainly haven't perished. I am not sure that I could name even one church that has gone out of business for a lack of perceptive vision. Some elderships literally run off some of their best people, showing themselves to be completely imperceptive of the needs of the community of saints they serve. But since they are "right" and "orthodox" they manage to stay very much alive. I see no "vision" at all in their conduct, but they hardly "perish" in any sense of the term.

So with an individual. Some of the poorest planned lives seem somehow to turn out all right, while the most contemplative people, including those who save something for their latter years, are often the ones that "perish" in the reverses and tragedies that the best of planning could not avert. The simple truth is that "the best laid schemes of mice and men gang aft agley[1]." Life is like that. It just isn't the case that if people show vision they will

succeed, and that if they don't they'll fail —not always, to be sure. Yet we grant that insight and perception and vision are qualities to be cultivated in us all.

But that isn't what Pro. 29:18 is talking about, and this illustrates how careless men can be in the way they handle the scriptures, making them teach what was never intended and what isn't necessarily true in the first place. This is to *abuse* the word, imposing upon it what we want it to say, as if we were saying, "If it doesn't mean that, it ought to!"

The word for *vision* in Pro. 29:18 comes from a Hebrew term that appears scores of times in the Old Covenant scriptures, and it is always related to prophecy. Such as Jer. 14:14, referring to the false prophets: "They prophesy unto you a false vision," and Nah. 1:1, where the prophet's words are referred to as "the book of the vision of Nahum." Dan. 1:17 says Daniel had understanding "in all visions" and in Ezek. 12:22 and Micah 3:6 "vision" means the same as prophecy.

There are other passages that are similar to Pro. 29:18. Ezek. 7:26: "Mischief shall come upon mischief, and rumor shall be upon rumor; then shall they seek a vision of the prophet; but the law shall perish from the priest. and counsel from the ancients." This almost says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish." Lam. 2:9 is similar: "Her gates are sunk into the ground; he hath destroyed and broken her bars: her king and her princes are among the Gentiles: the law is no more; her prophets also find no vision from the Lord." Jerusalem is here described as being in a bad way, *perishing,* and one reason is that her prophets no longer have visions (prophecies) from the Lord.

Now let us read the passage in question in the *Revised Standard:* "Where there is no prophecy the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law."

The meaning is clear enough. When people do not have God's word to look to as it is revealed through His servants the prophets, they are in a bad way. They will "get out of hand," as one version puts it, or they will become undisciplined —or they will *perish,* as the *King James* puts it. The passage is saying that people must have God's word. They just can't make it otherwise. "Where there is no vision (revelations from God through his prophets), the people perish." The next line now fits: "but he that keepeth the law, happy is he."

We must cease using the scriptures as if they were some vending machine, cranking out for us whatever commodity we are looking for at the time. We might well perish, using the Bible like that! —*the Editor*

[1] 'Gang aft agley' is Scottish and means 'Often go wrong'

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What Kind of a Book is the Bible? . . .

THE INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

Because of the clear instruction that we have in 2 Tim. 3:16, "All scripture is inspired of God," we can unhesitatingly speak of the *fact* of inspiration. The scriptures *are* inspired. But any explanation as to just how this is must be seen as a mere theory. There is no theory of inspiration in the scriptures, and it is just as well that we have no theory. Nor is inspiration itself, much less any theory of it, essential to the Christian faith. Just as there was religion given of God before there were any Old Covenant scriptures, there was the gospel of Christ before there was any written record of it. Even the great B. B. Warfield, of old Princeton fame and a noble defender of the inspired scriptures, insisted that "Were there no such thing as inspiration, Christianity would be true, and all its essential doctrines would be credibly witnessed to us."

It may prove helpful to distinguish some terms that are often confused, namely *inspiration, revelation, illumination,* and *interpretation.* Inspiration is "the breathing of God" into the man and what he writes in such a way that the information is given that God intends and it is protected against any substantial error. The Spirit is at work in such away, in both the man and the scripture, that God's purposes are realized without any material mistakes being allowed to occur. This allows for errors in the Bible, which are evident enough, but no error that interferes with the message and purpose God has in view. A recording may have scratches, but this doesn't matter so long as the master's voice comes through loud and clear.

Revelation is the unfolding of the mind of God. It is a disclosure of what man cannot know otherwise. This makes it distinct from inspiration. There can be revelation without inspiration and there can be inspiration without revelation. When God thundered forth on Mt. Sinai, "I am the Lord thy God who brought you out of the land of Egypt," He was disclosing His mind. "God spoke all these words, saying," reads the record. This was revelation, but He inspired no one in making it known. He simply spoke it, burning His words into tables of stone. When a record was later made of this, such as we have in *Exodus,* it was by inspiration, that is, God so superintended the writing of it as to safeguard it against error.

This means that one might be inspired without receiving any revelation from God, which must have been the case with Luke in *Luke-Acts.* The preface to Luke makes it clear that the doctor got his information, not directly from God, but by researching his sources. "Having followed all things closely for some time past," Luke was ready to do his thing. It was not a matter of his sitting down and writing as God disclosed to him the information, which would have been revelation. Like one writing a thesis, Dr. Luke gathered his material over a long period of time, both from existing narratives and living witnesses, and

then began his story. But it was inspiration in that God over-ruled, causing him to gather the material that fit the divine purpose, and God "in-breathed" (inspired) the writing of it so that it would stand as an authentic record, free of any crucial error. So, we'll go on record as saying what is obvious enough, that *Luke-Acts* is *not* part of God's revelation, though it is part of the inspired scriptures.

Illumination is enlightenment, and Eph. 1:18 shows this to be one of the things the Spirit does for us: "having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you." Illumination "lights up" what is already revealed, but it bears no additional revelation. 2 Cor. 4:4 shows how this is: "In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing (Illumination) the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ." Here Satan keeps the unbelievers from *seeing* what is already revealed. So the Holy Spirit can so enlighten the mind that it will "see" in what is already revealed that which might otherwise be missed. The psalmist could pray: "Open mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things from your word." The insight to see what is already revealed in illumination.

There can be illumination without inspiration, and there can be inspiration without illumination. Any of us can be illumined by the Spirit in our study of the word even though we are not inspired. The Spirit can "cause us to see" the deeper truths, or he might lead us to consult certain scriptures that we need at the time. This is not revelation nor inspiration, but it is illumination. And 1 Pet. 1:10-11 reveals that the prophets "searched and inquired" into those things that they foretold, without really understanding all they were saying. Here we have both revelation and inspiration, but not illumination. A prophet might speak God's word and yet not understand what he's saying!

Interpretation is simply man's view of God's revelation. Revelation is what God says, while interpretation is the meaning we give to what He has said. We have a way of confusing the two, identifying what we suppose the scriptures to teach with what they actually teach. Those who deny that they interpret, but simply "take the Bible for what it says," are only kidding themselves. There is no way to make sense of *any* literature except by ascertaining its meaning. This is true of the simplest sentences, whether in the Bible or out. If we are told "The man made the horse fast," we have to judge by context what it means, for it could refer to hurrying an animal, causing him to go without food, tying him, or hurriedly carving him out of wood or stone. If Jesus tells us that he is "the bread come down out of heaven," we don't just take it for what it says. One who doesn't interpret does nothing. It is important that we realize that we do interpret and that we are *not* infallible interpreters.

The various theories of inspiration are probably more interesting than they are profitable, and yet anyone who gives any thought to this question will come up with some theory. This is all right if he will but keep in mind that it is only a theory, and that it is not

something he can impose upon others. We can believe that one theory is better than others, but we have no way of really knowing since the scriptures set forth no explanation as to how they are inspired. 2 Pet. 1:21 tells of how "men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God," but again we have the *fact* of inspiration without any explanation of *how.*

Some theories are clearly unacceptable. The *dictation theory* makes the writer God's amanuensis, a passive instrument that takes dictation and passes it on to paper. He is but a pen, not a penman. This theory sees the Bible as a book dictated by God, which gives no place for the writer's own individuality. This theory is most difficult to defend in the light of so many differences in the gospel narratives. Take Mt. 27:37: "And over his head they put the charge against him, which read, "This is Jesus the King of the Jews." Mark 15:26 says it read, "The King of the Jews," while Lk. 23:38 has it, "This is the King of the Jews" and Jn. 19:19 has, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."

This makes it hard for a dictation theory, for all four accounts are different. Three of them have to be wrong in terms of what Pilate actually wrote. But the Spirit saw to it that we get the point. That is inspiration amidst the "jars and conflicts" between the writers. But surely if the Spirit had dictated, he would not have made the statement four different ways to the four different evangelists.

The "jars and conflicts" are abundant in scripture, but they are no problem if one does not impose upon the Bible a character that it doesn't claim for itself, which makes it some sort of heavenly document that escapes man's imperfect handiwork. Its glory lies in being human as well as divine, in being imperfect even while perfect. It is, after all, a *human* book, emerging amidst oriental culture, and it would be strange indeed if such marks were not upon it. God gave us the Bible *in* history, not in a vacuum in which the Holy Spirit recited the story of the ages, in some such manner as is claimed for Mohammed and the Koran in that cave.

The story of Jesus healing the centurion's slave boy points up what I am saying. Lk. 7:2f. tells how the centurion "sent to him elders of the Jews, asking him to come and heal his slave." It goes on to tell how the elders commended the centurion, assuring Jesus that he is a worthy man and that "he loves our nation and he built us our synagogue." Mt. 8:5 tells the same story, but there it says that the centurion himself came to Jesus, saying nothing about the elders or their conversation with Jesus. Which is right? Did the centurion himself go to Jesus or did he send elders? A study of the situation may lead us to conclude that a man of authority would send a delegation rather than go himself, and that the elders really did say those things to Jesus. But this makes Matthew wrong, *wrong* in some of the details, that is, but still *right* in the purpose he had in mind: to tell of the centurion's faith and Jesus' power to heal.

This sort of thing authenticates the scriptures, for if they were fabrication, the deceivers would have never allowed conflicts of that sort. It would have been smoother than that. And this isn't going to upset anyone unless his faith is in some theory of inspiration that he has no business having to start with.

It is like the narratives about resurrection morning, which do not lack in conflicts. One of the most glaring is the disagreement between Mark and Luke in reference to the behavior of the women after seeing the empty tomb and hearing the voice of an angel. Mk. 16:8 says they fled from the tomb in great fear, "and they said nothing to anyone." Lk. 24:9 says, "and returning from the tomb they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest." Which is right? Obviously they cannot both be right in reference to this detail.

This is not going to be a big deal to anyone unless he has that view of the Bible expressed by one of our brothers in the *Firm Foundation:* "God's book is true. It is infallible. It is verbally inspired. There are no errors or mistakes within it. If the reader knows of one, let him produce it."

I could make this statement except for a line or two. I would put sentence 4: There are no errors or mistakes that *really matter.* And to say "verbally inspired" is to be vague, and it reflects a theory of inspiration that is risky. I will simply say, *It is inspired,* which is what 2 Tim. 3:16 says. It does not say "all scripture is *verbally* inspired."

And the *inspiration* of the resurrection narratives to me is that God's message comes through loud and clear, blessedly clear: *He is risen!* That the writers have scratches in the record only enhances the great truth that they all agree on, and the only one that matters anyhow. *Jesus lives!*

Other theories of inspiration that we reject are the *intuition theory* and the *illumination theory.* The *intuition theory* holds that God enhanced the natural intuitive powers of the writers of scripture, much like Shakespeare might be thought of as "inspired." There is nothing supernatural involved.

The *illumination theory* holds that the writers themselves are inspired but not their writings. But this theory allows for nothing really supernatural, for it is but the elevation of his spiritual powers to the point that he is above other men in "illumination," and so he writes more sublime literature. It allows for no objective revelation. Man gains truth through his own illumined insight.

So I reject the dictation theory on the ground that it is mechanical and because it does not give proper place to the humanity of the scriptures. I reject the intuition theory because it accounts for the scriptures on strictly naturalistic basis, ignoring the supernatural. I reject the illumination theory because I believe we are talking about inspired writings and not simply inspired men, and because inspiration transcends any power man has in himself.

That leaves the *dynamical theory.* which is the one I see as the most acceptable. It holds that inspiration is supernatural, plenary (complete), and dynamical, which means that the scriptures are a union of the divine and human elements. The Bible is the work of both God and man, and it is not to be considered either wholly human or wholly divine. The Spirit moved in the apostles and prophets, causing them to speak and write in keeping with God's purposes, but they remained as much human as before. Just as the presence of God glowed in the burning bush, the bush remained as much a bush as before.

This means that inspiration did not remove the personal peculiarities of the writers, but rather pressed those unique traits into service. So, we have divine truth in *human* form, which means that we need not be surprised when the imperfections of men bleed through. This explains why a writer may quote inaccurately from the Old Testament while making his point clear enough, or why he may attribute something to one prophet when it was really from another. Inspiration does not insure him against a faulty memory, not necessarily. Preferences and prejudices even enter in, as well as one's bad grammar, one writer using much better Greek or Hebrew than another. When God made a prophet or an apostle he did not unmake the man. This is why Paul ventures into considerable autobiographical detail, telling about his conversion (not always exactly the same way) as well as his "thorn in the flesh," which he waited fourteen years to tell. He wouldn't have told it then had it not been for the critical situation at Corinth. But in all this the Spirit moved, using the situations that arose to give us the scriptures God wanted us to have. *Philemon* is a very ordinary personal letter, containing some everyday "small talk" ("Prepare a guest room for me"), but the Spirit served as superintendent, making sure that we got this precious little document. Paul remains as much Paul as before, though inspired of the Spirit, even to the using of offensive language that he could have avoided, but which was so much a part of his temperament, such as Gal. 5:12. The *New English* gets the closest: "As for these agitators, they had better go the whole way and make eunuchs of themselves." It could be put plainer than that! The Spirit did not dictate that, for it boils forth from Paul's seething anger. But the Spirit brings it into tow, vinegar and all, and uses it for God's purpose.

The *dynamic theory* says, therefore, that inspiration uses the normal methods of literary composition. God did not employ the miraculous in giving us the scriptures as much as He mediated and supervised the natural and normal flow of literary production. Nor does inspiration mean inerrancy, except in those things essential to the main purpose of scripture. Neither does it imply revelation or direct communication, for God often used the writer's own experience and knowledge in conveying His word to man. But inspiration does imply that the human mind can be inhabited and energized by the Spirit of God, while at the same time preserving its own uniqueness in intelligence and resourcefulness. *—the Editor*

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Travel Letter . . .

SUMMER HIGHLIGHTS

Those who make "the retreat circuit" are encouraged by all the signs of spiritual renewal. These may once have been a good excuse for the fellows to get away from it all and spend a few days goofing off with the gang, or perhaps a chance for the family to take an inexpensive vacation, but they are more and more becoming occasions for serious study and soul-searching. I was present at two of these during the summer and the vibrations that came my way were all positive.

Dr. E. O. Partridge of El Dorado, Illinois was my host for the Annual Men's Retreat that was conducted at nearby West Frankfort. He and his wife make the second medical family that I know among our folk that has taken a little black child, placing it right alongside their own. Their home is as people-oriented and outgoing as one could be, almost to the straining point it seemed, but these always appear to be the happiest and most productive people I meet. Maybe physicians aren't so arrogant after all, as per an article I recently saw in the *National Observer.*

At the retreat I spent several hours reviewing the history of the Restoration Movement, especially in reference to the passion for unity, which sparked the effort, and the ugly pattern of partyism which has well nigh destroyed it. The response was most favorable. Perhaps it is Bicentennial fever, or maybe it is a growing concern for roots and meaning in these uneasy times, but there is no question that our folk generally in discipledom have a growing interest in their common origins. I point out to them that we have a "unity heritage," and for us to be indifferent to this would be like Quakers showing no concern for their dramatic history as peacemakers.

Anyway, they got sort of turned on at West Frankfort over our history, rank and file folk as well as preachers, and they want to learn more about where we came from and what happened to us along the way. We still have folk in Texas, and maybe a few elsewhere, who agree with Henry Ford that "history is more or less bunk," but if such ones will give their own past a chance to speak, they might move from a Ford to a Lincoln, for Old Abe told the folk of his day, "We're making history whether we like it or not." If we are making it, we'd better take a look at the material we're using, which is certainly drawn more from the past than from the present. History may well be bunk if one's only concern is in making automobiles, but for one who seeks to make peace the whole sweep of the past becomes part of his resources.

I was asked to do something similar at the Week of Ministry at Milligan College, where around 200 preachers gathered with their families, mostly from Christian Churches. Having the better part of a week, twice each day, I had time to talk in detail about Barton W. Stone, Thomas Campbell, Alexander Campbell, and Robert Richardson, whom I described as builders of a new republic as well as founders of a movement. They were all, except Thomas Campbell, editors, and even he was a scribe of the old school, giving us the Movement's greatest document, that Magna Charter of Christian unity, the *Declaration and Address*, the principles of which we studied in detail. These four were chosen because they wrought out in the crucible of controversy the great principles of our Plea. They moved boldly across a frontier of new ideas and a new nation alike.

Those who hear these stories are surprised to learn that Alexander Campbell was a politician, a leading wool grower, and a builder of a turnpike, as well as publisher, educator and reformer; that Robert Richardson conducted scientific farming experiments for the newly created Department of Agriculture on his Bethany farm and served as the nation's first "professor of chemistry" as well as a physician, editor, and biographer of Campbell and the chronicler of a great Movement; that Thomas Campbell walked away from one town where he had a school in protest of a law that kept him from teaching blacks; that Barton Stone had such a passion for unity and disgust for partyism that when he moved to Jacksonville, Illinois and found Restoration churches divided, he would have nothing to do with either of them until they united, which they did! (Just now that doesn't work that way in Denton, Texas!)

The positive response to Restoration history at Milligan and elsewhere has convinced me that much more needs to be done, especially in rediscovering the values and principles that motivated those old soldiers. To this end I plan a series on our history to run all of 1976 in this journal, which will be in keeping with our Bicentennial year. It will replace the current series on the Bible.

Extended meetings with congregations, with assemblies only in the evenings, enable one to stir among the people more than do campus gatherings or unity meetings. At Lowell, Indiana Church of Christ I worked alongside Bill Bush, who was so new to the congregation that I was better acquainted with the people than he, having been in a meeting with them last year. We had a fruitful week of visitation together. There is still no substitution for sitting with people in their homes and sharing Jesus.

One incident at Lowell in a nursing home is indelibly stamped on my memory. While Bill was in another room, I was visiting with this dear old Roman Catholic woman who was so very lonely, of foreign extraction. We talked together about the love of God as manifested through Jesus and how this transcends all sectarian considerations. She lived with her husband for over 50 years before she lost him, and now the hours crawl by like years for her. She saw that I really cared, and it touched her. After the visit Bill and I

worked our way back to the first floor in an hour or so. At the entrance way sat this dear old soul, her lonely eyes fixed upon us once more. “I just wanted to look at you one more time,” she said as we left, almost breaking my heart. That was enough to get me back to see her at least once more while I was there.

In another room in this home we prayed over the vegetable-like form of a very aged woman while her “unchurched” daughter stood by in appreciation. She was puzzled as to why her mother, a church woman, was so neglected by the town’s ministers. She wanted to know if the preachers expected to be paid for such service, and I explained that they probably were not aware of the need. But I left thinking, *paid to pray!* What kind of an impression have we left upon the world as to *the ministry* of the Body of Christ?

I would urge those who read these words, *visit your nursing homes!* Not just preachers, but all of you. Take a child along, for those old souls seldom see the younger ones anymore. At first your visits can be random, but you’ll soon find those who need continual attention. You can check them out for a visit to your home. Remember that you are more like Jesus, not so much when properly posed in your pew at church, but when you are out among the world’s lonely rejects, the old and young alike.

Before flying home from Chicago I was blessed with a visit in the home of Jim and Linda Tabor. One evening a number of preachers and their wives from the area were present for a sharing session, which left me deeply thankful for the high calibre of leaders we have in that area. These folk really love Jesus and the church, and we have reason to believe in a bright future for the Church of Christ with this kind of emerging leadership.

I was especially pleased to get to visit with the Matteson Church of Christ (206th and Crawford), where both Jim Tabor and Marvin Pegg minister. That it is one of our freer and more spiritual churches is indicated by the statement it has issued to the public, part of which will especially interest you.

> This congregation is a group of people drawn together by a common faith in Jesus Christ for worship and service. It exists here as a simple New Testament body, pointing those around us to the Christ and God of the Bible. Its doors are open to all who from the quiet depths of their hearts would reach out to God in meaningful worship, godly living, and Christian services as revealed in God’s word.
>
> Our service is simple and warm, planned to help each individual to commune rewardingly with the heavenly Father. Brought together by a deep personal need to praise God and receive His blessings, Christians participate actively in each expression of worship. . .

> We are a free, independent congregation, led by our elders, with Christ alone as head. We do, however, enjoy a spiritual closeness to other churches of Christ which number about 23,000 congregations throughout the world. We are free to study, teach, and work as our conscience, directed by the Bible, leads us.
>
> Our effort to be simply Christians in no way claims that we have attained to everything that name represents. We confess shortcomings, but believe we are called together in fellowship with Christ and with one another to supply our need.

I have been to the old Grassy Church of Christ near Arab, Alabama many times through the years. We've gone through "the change of life" together, with their reputation being almost as bad as my own! As I always do when with them for a few days, I went out to sit with those with special needs. I never cease to be amazed at how tragedy can lay such a heavy hand upon some while leaving others virtually untouched. One sister, barely 40, is nursing her husband as if he were a child. A malignancy is eating away his brain, and now he cannot even feed himself; but he did remember me, haltingly calling my name. A few years back he was robust and healthful, successful in business, and devoted to Jesus. His lovely wife breezes about the home, smiling and ministering as if she owns the world. Even when we can't understand life when it takes turns like that, we can rejoice in that kind of faith and forbearance.

Another youngish couple there recently buried their 19-year old baby. That's right, he was still a baby at that age, for he never grew more than a few inches. Never talked, walked or even crawled. Brain damage at birth. He kept on living, to the surprise of the doctors, and he kept on being loved and adored by a dutiful and beautiful mother and a hard-working father, who have one other normal and intelligent child. All those years, myriads of hospitals and doctors and myriads of dollars and diminishing hope, have at last grounded to a halt. Some have to learn that life is difficult and mysterious in the most oppressive ways. I yet think of that sister, always faithfully at her baby's side, feeding him with an eyedropper, and always hoping against hope that life would change for him, that he would grow as well as live.

I assured her that now that God has her son that the growth problem would be solved, that the Father would grant soul growth, and that someday when she sees her son it will be a different story. And who knows but what heaven will be richer and more meaningful for that couple because of this unique ministry that tragedy handed them, and that the love they gave their child, forsaken by nature, will receive its special reward. A soul, cultivated

in heaven and ministered to by angels, may one day say to a radiant mother, *Thank you for loving me,* in an angelic tongue, of course! —*the Editor*

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OFFICE NOTES

One of our faithful readers in North Carolina sent a note of appreciation for introducing her to William Barclay's 17-volume *Daily Bible Study.* I sent it on to the professor in Scotland, knowing he would appreciate this grass-roots commendation of his efforts. She and other Barclay readers will want his new book, *A Spiritual Biography,* which is sort of his life story. He weaves his personal experiences in with his theological problems: "Why should my mother, lovely in body and in spirit, good all through, have to die like that?" He tells how his sicknesses as a boy kept him out of school, enabling him to get a better education through reading at home! This book is well worth the 5.95 we have to charge you.

Lester McAllister of Christian Theological Seminary and William Tucker of TCU have collaborated in giving us *Journey in Faith: A History of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).* The price is high at 12.50, but this is a definitive history of over 500 pages with many pictures and charts. It dates the beginning of the Christian Church in 1830, when the Mahoning Baptist Association dissolved and gave way to the Disciples of Christ, a date that can probably be defended, for up until then the Movement was a reformed effort among the Baptists. It dates "Churches of Christ" as on their own and separate by 1906, but is less specific as to when Independent Christian Churches became a separate group, though it cites the1937 North American Christian Convention as the beginning of the division. It discusses the early period within the backdrop of 19th century American religion in general, and does it very well indeed. The writers make it a fast-moving journey of faith, giving the issues and developments a fair shake. The struggles between "strict primitivists" or "rigid restorationists" and the more liberal wing are discussed with reasonable objectivity, whether the question be resident ministers, missionary societies or instrumental music. But once a division occurs the history of the Disciples goes on uninterrupted. No effort is made to trace developments in "Christian Churches" and "Churches of Christ" after they leave the Disciples, though the story of the departures is told sympathetically and with a fair presentation of the diverse points of view. This will no doubt be the "official" history of the Disciples for a long time to come, replacing as it does

the renowned work of Garrison and DeGroot. For this reason the more serious students of our history should have it on hand.

For 4.95 we will send you a very valuable study by William Neil (University of Nottingham, England) on *The Difficult Sayings of Jesus.* He takes 24 of the more baffling statements of Jesus and deals with them in the light of what they meant then and what they mean now. These include "All who take the sword die by the sword," "Whoever does the will of God is my brother, my sister, my mother," and "If your hand is your undoing, cut it off." Others deal with what he said about marriage and divorce, the unpardonable sin, life after death, the Jews, the kingdom of God, and children. It is a highly resourceful volume, worthy of both one's time and money.

George Eldon Ladd is a very responsible New Testament scholar at Fuller Seminary. His *I Believe in the Resurrection of Jesus* will give you just about the last word in confirming this cornerstone of the Christian faith. He deals with all the usual problems, including the inconsistencies of the resurrection narratives, but ends up with a strong, defensible evangelical faith. 2.95.

A woman sometimes has a lot to say to the church. Edith Schaeffer does so in *Christianity is Jewish*. She dares to say that the early church, being Jewish, could not have been anti-Jewish, for if anything, it was anti-Gentile. She takes you through the Bible with a Jewish slant, and we suggest it for your fall reading. 5.95.

Other new titles sort of speak for themselves. *Crowded Pews and Lonely People* is a study of the famine of love in the church and some workable solutions (2.95). A psychologist and his wife write on *How to Handle Pressure* (5.95), and a prominent pastor, with his marriage broken and his life shattered, rebuilt his life, which he tells about in *Dream a New Dream* (4.95).

The editor's public visits this month will be in Tulsa and Houston. Oct. 10-12 he will share in the Fellowship Forum at the Bassett Church of Christ, 12 W. 38th, Sand Springs, Ok., which has an all-day service on Saturday as well as a Friday night gathering. Oct. 24-26 he will be with the Southeast Christian Church, 8811 Frey Rd., which is off the Gulf Freeway near Almeda Mall. Meetings will be Friday evening, all day Saturday, and the usual Sunday arrangement.

Early this year we asked our readers to help us double our subscription list in 1975, which is of course a large order. While this has not yet been realized, we are enjoying a vigorous growth, adding a few hundreds of new readers each month. With your help we can still attain our goal by winter. We still offer the unusual bargain of this paper, 200 pages a year, for only 1.00 per name per year in clubs of five or more. You send us the five names and addresses of people you believe to be open enough to read what we have to say, and we'll send them the paper for a full year for only 5.00. Send as many names as you like at 1.00 per name. Many of our longtime readers were introduced to the paper in this

way. You might do more good than you realize. We hope you'll respond to this and help us double our readership by January.

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OUR CHANGING WORLD

The reaction to my article on *Living in Adultery* in the June issue has been resounding, indicating that much more work needs to be done on this sensitive subject. I have been reminded of a statement made by Pat Harrell in his *Divorce and Remarriage in the Early Church* that relates to a point made in my article to Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. "If Jesus did not accept the validity of divorce and remarriage, then the woman would have had only one husband and several lovers," says Pat.

Still another response to the problem comes from Marvin Pegg of the Matteson Church of Christ in the Chicago area. Referring to Heb. 13:4 where "marriage is honorable in all and the bed undefiled," Marvin concludes that he cannot refer to any marriage that is recognized by the courts as legal as an adulterous union.

We continue to get questions about the meaning of "perfect" in 1 Cor. 13:10. This quotation from the *European Evangelist* by Frederick Norris, a close student of Christian origins, will be of interest: "No text in the NT demands that either the Spirit or the gifts have ceased. Some have suggested that 1 Cor. 13:10 means that when the 'perfect' came, that is the NT canon, the 'imperfect,' that is, the gifts of tongues and prophecy, were done away with. Yet in the first six centuries of the Church, and probably beyond, no one except heretics thought the 'perfect' had come."

During the summer in Crane, Texas they had an old-fashioned debate between a Baptist and a Church of Christ preacher. Each affirmed that *his* church is scriptural "in origin, doctrine and practice." What is new these days is that we have a lot of Baptists and Church of Christ folk who would consider denying that either of the two denominations (or "named" groups if that term is offensive) is scriptural in origin, doctrine and practice. They used to add "in name" to that list, and we'll throw that one in for good measure. I am not sure how you would go about being scriptural in *origin*.

"Christ's Church" has begun meeting in McDonough, Georgia at the Courthouse Square. It is advertised as "a joint mission effort by individuals who have been worshipping in area Churches of Christ and Christian Churches, and it is a Movement united in its desire to restore New Testament Christianity." It is apparently "noninstrument." The area phone is 957-9207.

Paul Crow in "*One Church*," published by the Disciples' Council on Christian Unity, says, "More than ever I believe Christian unity is a life, a call to every Christian." He says it is not the call of the elitists or the professionals, but of all believers. He insists that we cannot rest comfortably with the scandal of division among Christians, and that we must find ways to translate our concern into prayers, strategies, and decisions.

James P. Needham wrote at length on "the fellowship issue" in his *Torch*, a paper generally associated with the conservative" Churches of Christ. One of his own fellow-workers responded to it rather vigorously, accusing him of showing sympathy for "the Garrett-Ketcherside-Fudge" position. The *Torch* editor does not buy that, but does insist that "what most brethren preach about unity is not necessarily what the scriptures teach." There is, by the way, a great deal going on among the "conservative" churches along these lines. A lot of the young princes are talking about Jesus and the grace of God, and that will do it, you know.

We reported earlier on the Baptist Church of Christ gathering in Houston to share with Dr. George R. Beasley-Murray, the British scholar who is now at the Baptist seminary in Louisville. It was a one-sided affair, for the Church of Christ men outnumbered the Baptists 51-10. Since this gathering the Baptist sponsors have become disenchanted by what some of the Church of Christ fellows reported in their "war bulletins" about the meeting, as if the doctor got shown a thing or two by the faithfu1. But this cannot be said of the report by Robert Shank in *Christian Chronicle*, who reported positively on the meeting, and in hopes of other such affairs, opined: "As at Houston, attendance will necessarily be limited to men who will understand that such meeting is not a 'confrontation' at which the objective is to 'clobber the opposition,' and who are mature enough to contribute to and profit from an exchange with men whose understandings do not coincide at all with their own. A heated, noisy, chip-on-shoulder exchange would be a sorry spectacle and a disaster to the cause of New Testament Christianity and the unity of the faith."

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READERS' EXCHANGE

May the Lord bless you as you continue to endeavor to pull our divided "restoration brotherhood" together again. I trust that all of us will see the folly of our past divisions and the great price we have paid for our sinfulness. Your efforts are appreciated and we pray that God will give you many years to sound the plea. —*Isaac J. Flora, Xenia, Ohio*

Your “Living in Adultery” was interesting, not only to me but to my Dad who was here on vacation. We both read it three times and discussed it at length. You certainly have raised some questions, and I suspect you’ll hear from a great many of your readers. Continue to challenge the old, worn-out positions for only then are we made to think. — Buff Scott, Cherokee, Iowa

Our students come from all denominations, range in age from 25-63 and include this year the vice-chief of chaplains of the ROK Air Force. We are especially proud that we have had three men from the Church of Christ to receive degrees and have six more presently in class. —Bert Ellis, Berean Christian Center, Box 141, Pusan, Korea

We’ve had some interesting visitors lately. Randall Trainer really inspired us with his report on how the church is progressing in Wakefield, Mass. It numbers about 250 and is comprised principally of former Roman Catholics and various shades of worldly people. Five former prostitutes have been baptized along with numerous individuals who were on drugs. The one responsible for this evangelism and much of the growth is a former alcoholic. —Stan Daulton, Abilene, Texas

This summer I worshipped at Quaker Street in Lubbock, a non-class group that is truly open. I spent a week with the Glenwood Springs, Co. people, a free and loving group. One of their most spiritual men, Dr. Jim Hauptli, an elder who came from the Christian Church, was quite a reader of yours until cancer made it impossible for him to read. He died recently as a great witness to the goodness of God in his illness as he had been in his life. *—Margaret Williams, Houston, Texas*

I know of a congregation near by which just recently called a meeting out of desperation and voted whether to stay Church of Christ or go Pentecostal. I understand that the former won out, but to the Devil goes the victory. Oh to God, if we could just stay with the essence of Christianity and keep our opinions as private matters in our relation with brethren. - *William F. Jones, Fairborn, Ohio*

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